



Handbook  
for Victims of  
**DOMESTIC  
ABUSE**





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## Definitions

**Ascendants:** People who are older than you in your family lineage, such as your parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and so on. They are the ancestors who came before you.

**Affinity:** The relationship between a person and their spouse's relatives. It is the connection created through marriage rather than blood. For example, your spouse's parents, siblings, and other relatives are considered your "affinity" relatives.

- **First-degree affinity** refers to the immediate relatives of your spouse. This includes your spouse's parents, siblings, and children. They are considered your first-degree affinity relatives because they are directly related to your spouse.
- **Second-degree affinity** includes the relatives who are one step further from your spouse in terms of relationship. This includes your spouse's grandparents, grandchildren, and your spouse's siblings' children. They are still connected to you through marriage but are not as closely related as the first-degree affinity relatives.
- **Third-degree affinity** refers to the relatives who are one step further from your spouse's immediate family. This includes your spouse's great-grandparents, great-grandchildren, and your spouse's siblings' grandchildren. They are more distantly related to you through marriage. It's important to note that the degree of affinity can vary depending on cultural and legal contexts, and the specific relationships may differ in different regions or family systems.

**Descendants:** The people who come after you in your family lineage, such as your children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and so on. They are the future generations who are born after you.

**Ex officio:** In a domestic violence context this term means that there is no need to request the police to issue any criminal charges against third parties that may result from their investigations, since these will be issued automatically.

**Parte Civile:** A plaintiff for damages or injured party in criminal proceedings.

**Protection Order:** A legal document issued by the Law Courts during ongoing court proceedings to protect a victim of domestic violence from harm or abuse, often involving restrictions on contact or proximity by the alleged perpetrator.

**Temporary Protection Order:** A legal document issued by the Law Courts that provides immediate and temporary protection to an individual who is believed to be at risk of harm or abuse. It is typically granted in cases of domestic violence, harassment, or stalking and may include provisions such as restraining the alleged abuser from contacting or approaching the person seeking protection. Temporary protection orders are usually issued for a limited period, allowing the affected individual time to seek a more permanent form of legal protection.

**Restraining Order:** A legal document issued by the Law Courts normally on conclusion of court proceedings that prohibits the perpetrator from contacting or approaching a victim of domestic violence, typically due to concerns for the safety and wellbeing of same.

## Introduction

This handbook aims to provide essential information, definitions, and procedures for victims of domestic violence. It serves as a guide to understanding the nature of domestic violence, recognizing its signs, and taking necessary steps to protect oneself and seek help.

It also aims to empower victims of domestic violence by providing them with knowledge, resources, and guidance to navigate the complexities of their situation.

It emphasizes the importance of seeking professional help, engaging in safety planning, and recognizing that they are not alone. Remember, each situation is unique, and seeking personalized assistance from local support services is vital.

## What is domestic violence?

Maltese law (Chapter 581) defines domestic violence as:

All acts or omissions including verbal, physical, sexual, psychological or economical violence causing physical and, or moral harm or suffering including threats of such acts or omissions, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, that occur within the family or domestic unit, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim, and shall include children who are witnesses of violence within the family or domestic unit.



## What is the domestic violence prevention act?

The new law on the prevention of domestic violence will be giving a new tool and support to those persons who may be at risk of domestic violence. Through this law, persons who are in an intimate relationship can submit an application with the Victim Support Agency or the Police to verify if their partner has a history of domestic violence. The person will only be given information on convictions for domestic violence and not allegations that have been made or pending cases before the Court. To also ensure data protection, the Police will verify the applicant's right to access the information through specific criteria established by this law. The response to the applicant will be provided within seven days, and if necessary, a risk warning notice will also be issued. In this case, the Police within the Agency will also explain the reasons for potential risk of domestic violence, while the professionals within the Victim Support Agency will provide information about available support services.

A person can submit an online application through this link - <https://victimsupportagency.com/prevention-form> or apply personally at the Victim Support Agency - 52, Old Theatre Street, Valletta (Plus Code: WG26+2R Valletta | GPS Coordinates: 35.900063,14.512062).

## Am I a victim of domestic violence?

Yes, if your relationship with the perpetrator falls under any of the following categories:

- Current or former spouses, civil union partners or cohabitants;
- Persons living in the same household or had lived with the offender within a period of three years preceding the offence;
- Persons whose marriage has been dissolved or declared null;
- Ascendants or descendants;
- Other adults sharing the same household;
- Persons in an informal relationship, who are or were dating;
- Persons who are or have been formally or informally engaged with a view to getting married or enter into a civil union;
- Persons who are related to each other by consanguinity (blood ties) or affinity up to the third degree inclusively;
- Persons having or having had a child in common.

## What should I do if I am a victim of domestic violence?

- a. In case of an emergency, call 112 or 119 for immediate police assistance on site;
- b. If it is not an immediate emergency, you can seek assistance at any police station, from where you will be accompanied to the Police Gender-Based & Domestic Violence Unit (GBDVU) for an in-depth investigation;
- c. You can also report directly at the GBDVU, situated at the Police General Headquarters in Floriana (Address: St. Calcedonius Square, Floriana FRN1530) (Plus Code: VGV3+J6 Floriana | GPS Coordinates: 35.894063,14.503063) to file a formal police report, or call on +356 2294 2717 / 2777 or send an email to [gbdv.police@gov.mt](mailto:gbdv.police@gov.mt) for any enquiries or further assistance;
- d. Gozitan residents may either report a domestic violence case at the GBDVU or else at the Victoria Police Station in Rabat, Gozo (Plus Code: 26VR+RJ Victoria | GPS Coordinates: 36.0445026,14.2414177) (+356 2294 4200 / 3014);

## Remit of the Police Gender-Based & Domestic Violence Unit (GBDVU)

The Malta Police GBDVU was set up in late 2020 to provide a dedicated and professional response by trained officers to fully meet the needs of domestic violence victims by protecting the lives and wellbeing of both adults and children who are at risk of domestic abuse whilst taking timely and effective remedial action against perpetrators.

The Unit's professional staff do their utmost to treat all victims of domestic abuse with respect, dignity and the right degree of empathy in partnership with key stakeholders.

### What is the procedure when filing a formal police report?

- a. A Preliminary Risk Assessment shall be performed by a GBDVU police officer in order to assess the severity of each case and prioritise accordingly in case of having several people waiting;
- b. If there is need for any medical intervention due to injuries, you shall be given immediate attention and accompanied to a health centre;
- c. You will be interviewed in a private and friendly setting in order for the Police to collect all the relevant information needed about the incident;
- d. You may also request to be assisted by a professional (e.g., legal advisor or social worker), an interpreter or cultural mediator whom you trust during the filing of the report;

- e. You may also bring someone to support you who may remain present during the whole process, unless this would not be in your best interest or could have a detrimental effect on the investigation itself;
- f. Any temporary addresses, contact information and relevant documents will be collected and recorded. However, if you are already living in a shelter or subsequently choose to enter one, details of the premises will not be disclosed to anyone else;
- g. A Risk Assessment will be carried out in a private setting by risk assessors from Agenzija Appoġġ to establish the level of associated risk. When completed, an official document is given to the police officer and presented in relative court proceedings;
- h. Once the police report is filed, you will be provided with a card listing the report number and the service number of the police officer who handled the report;
- i. You will also be referred to the Victim Support Agency (VSA) for any further assistance you may need;
- j. During the police investigations, the perpetrator will be duly spoken to by the police and, based on the outcome of said investigations, court action will follow.



## Remit of the Victim Support Agency (VSA)

The VSA provides for a national contact point of support to victims of any criminal offence. The Agency consists of a multi-disciplinary team made up of public officers, psycho-social professionals, members of the Malta Police (Victim Support Unit) and members of the Department of Probation and Parole.

The Agency offers three main services – Information, Emotional Support and Legal Guidance. The VSA also liaises with other public entities and non-governmental organizations through a common established referral system to avoid the duplication of services and secondary victimisation effects.

The VSA has recently launched a new freephone 116 006 as the National Supportline for Victims of Crime. All VSA services are free of charge and provided in a high confidential manner. The Agency operates from 52, Old Theatre Street, Valletta (Plus Code: WG26+2R Valletta | GPS Coordinates: 35.900063,14.512062).



## What happens if I report a breach of a Temporary Protection Order (TPO), a Protection Order (PO) or a Restraining Order (RO)?

- a. When a domestic violence report is filed, indicating that a victim is in serious risk of harm, the Police shall immediately apply to a Magistrate requesting the issue of a TPO unless the alleged offender is arraigned under arrest;
- b. A TPO shall remain in force for up to a maximum of 30 days from date of issue or until the first sitting against the alleged offender whichever is the earlier;
- c. A PO may be issued during court proceedings against any offender charged with domestic violence-related offences, either by the Court ex officio or at the request of any of the parties to the proceedings (in particular the victims themselves) for the purpose of providing for the safety of the victims concerned;
- d. Such an order shall remain in force for a period not exceeding five (5) years but can be revoked or extended by the Court for further periods;
- e. In passing judgement, besides any other punishment, the Court may bind the offender with a restraining order;
- f. An RO shall remain in force for such period not exceeding three (3) years and as specified by the Court, which may order such period to commence to run from the date of expiration or remission of the punishment;

- g. All breaches of TPOs, POs and ROs are to be reported immediately to the Police GBDVU by the victim as one would report any domestic violence report. Such reports shall be dealt with expediently and the victim is to be informed in good time with any action so taken by the police;
- h. Following the outcome of investigations, the alleged offender shall be arraigned in Court under arrest.

## What if my child is also a victim of domestic violence?

Child Protection Services will be immediately alerted in order to assist the police during the interview of the child in a friendly environment.



## What if I am a foreign national?

Any foreign nationals, whether asylum seekers, enjoying International Protection, EU Nationals or Third Country Nationals, in Malta and who are victims of domestic violence are offered support as anyone else and will be treated as victims first, regardless of one's residence permit, nationality and/or ethnicity.

We understand that in such instances perpetrators might be exerting even more control due to circumstances such as:

- Language barriers;
- All forms of dependency;
- Lack of knowledge regarding rights and services in Malta;
- Living in very isolated circumstances;
- Fear of repercussions when approaching authorities.

You may wish to be accompanied by a cultural mediator/interpreter of your trust during risk assessments and compilation of a Police report.

## Can I withdraw the report I made to the police?

No. Once the Police are informed that an offence of domestic violence might have been committed, they are obliged to investigate and issue related charges *ex-officio*. Moreover, you would be expected to testify in Court.

## What if I have nowhere to stay?

Professionals from Aġenzija Appoġġ will be informed to make the necessary arrangements for alternative accommodation. You will also be accompanied/escorted by police officers both to said premises, as well as during the collection of any personal belongings. All information regarding the location of such temporary accommodation will remain confidential.

## Will I be updated with any outcomes regarding my case?

In line with the Victims of Crime Act (Chapter 539 of the Laws of Malta), the Police shall keep you informed of any progress made in the investigation within a reasonable timeframe, if any arrests are made or if a suspect is charged or is summoned to appear in Court.

You will also be informed of any decision not to continue with the investigation if there is no suspect or there is not enough evidence. If the perpetrator is found guilty or pleads guilty, you will be also duly informed.

## What is expected from me during Court proceedings?

As parte civile all victims of domestic violence have the right to follow proceedings from start to end. Moreover, the parte civile status also allows a lawyer to represent a victim of domestic violence during such court proceedings.

## Where else can I find support?

In situations where it may be unsafe or uncomfortable to make a voice call, you can use our Silent Reporting Number 79770112 for immediate assistance.

## How do I use the Silent Reporting Number?

1. **Send a Text:** Compose a text message with your location and any other pertinent details and send it to 79770112.

For example: “NEED HELP at house number, street, locality”

2. **Stay Calm:** Help will be dispatched to your location.

### Safety Tips

- **Delete Messages:** After sending or receiving messages from the Silent Reporting Number, delete them to ensure your safety, especially if you believe your device may be checked.
- **Plan Ahead:** If you feel you might need to use this service in the future, save the number under a discreet name in your phone’s contacts. This can help avoid suspicion.
- **Stay Alert:** While help is on the way, remain as calm as possible and be aware of your surroundings. If you can find a safe place to hide or exit, do so.

## Where else can I find support?

Below, you may find a list of entities and organisations who can offer their services/support:

### **Police Gender-Based & Domestic Violence Unit**

**T** 2294 2717/2777

**E** gbdv.police@gov.mt

### **Police Crime Stop Number**

**T** 119

### **Police Emergency Number**

**T** 112

### **Aġenzija Appoġġ**

**T** 22959000

**E** appogg@gov.mt

### **Aġenzija Żghażaġh**

**T** 22586700

**E** agenzija.zghazagh@gov.mt

### **Child Protection Services (Fsws)**

**T** 22588900

**W** <https://fsws.gov.mt/mt/pages/ReportAbuse>

### **Dar Emmaus**

**T** 21552390

### **Dar Merħba Bik**

**T** 21440035

### **Dar Santa Bakhita**

**T** 27444676

### **Fondazzjoni Dar Il-Hena**

**T** 27888211

**Kellimni**

**W** [www.kellimni.com](http://www.kellimni.com)

**Legal Aid Malta Agency**

**T** 22471500

**E** [info.legalaidmalta@gov.mt](mailto:info.legalaidmalta@gov.mt)

**Mental Health Services (Psychology)**

**T** 23304313

**E** [health@gov.mt](mailto:health@gov.mt)

**Migrants Commision**

**T** 21222644

**E** [info@migrants.mt](mailto:info@migrants.mt)

**W** <https://migrants.mt/refer>

**National Support Line**

**T** 179

**National School Support Services Agency**

**T** 25983497 / 25689700

**E** [nationalschoolsupportservices.mfed@gov.mt](mailto:nationalschoolsupportservices.mfed@gov.mt)

**National Victim Support Line For Victims Of Crime-Malta**

**T** 116006 / 21228333

**E** [info@victimsupport.org.mt](mailto:info@victimsupport.org.mt)

**Rainbow Support Service (Lgbtiq)**

**T** 79430006

**E** [support@maltagayrights.org](mailto:support@maltagayrights.org)

**Soar Support Group (Sjaf)**

**T** 21808981

**E** [info@antidemalta.org](mailto:info@antidemalta.org)

**Social Work Unit Gozo****T** 22156630**E** [socialworkunit.mgoz@gov.mt](mailto:socialworkunit.mgoz@gov.mt)**Victim Support Agency****T** 116006**E** [victimsupport.police@gov.mt](mailto:victimsupport.police@gov.mt)**Victim Support Malta****T** 21228333**E** [info@victimsupport.org.mt](mailto:info@victimsupport.org.mt)**Women's Rights Foundation****T** 80062149**E** [info@wrf.org.mt](mailto:info@wrf.org.mt)**YMCA****T** 27674278**E** [info@ymcamalta.org](mailto:info@ymcamalta.org)







